DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 201 SP 039 982

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TITLE Colleges of Education: Are Educators Being Prepared To Teach Social and Emotional Competence in the Classroom?
PUB DATE 2001-03-02
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (53rd, Dallas, TX, March 1-4, 2001).
PUB TYPE Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Development; Elementary Secondary Education; *Emotional Response; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Competence; Moral Values; Preservice Teacher Education; Self Esteem; Social Values; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Character Education; *Emotions

ABSTRACT

The integration of social and emotional competency (SEC) skills teaching into the regular curriculum can motivate students and promote their self-confidence and abilities to function effectively in society. This study examined whether colleges of education were preparing teachers to educate students in ways that would maximize their ability to learn more effectively and were preparing future teachers to become competent and responsible citizens, sensitive to their role in a global community. The study used an 8-item survey to examine teachers' and counselors' perceptions of practices related to SEC curriculum. Participants came from colleges and universities nationwide. Results indicated that SEC was not addressed in mission statements and admission policies, nor were there many explicit courses offered to teach SEC skills. Respondents perceived a crowded curriculum and state requirements as the two main hindrances to SEC inclusion. Although private institutions indicated that the curriculum was too crowded for SEC, they also indicated that they perceived their graduates as ready to address SEC issues in their own classrooms. Most respondents were interested in pursuing an increased emphasis on SEC education. (SM)

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ED 452 201

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American Association of Teacher Educators
March 2, 2001
Dallas, Texas

SP 039 982

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Introduction

The ever increasing needs of children and adolescents and the expectations of a technological society are on a collision course with the growing demands on our educational system. The need for children to grow in ways which will prepare them for the real world is gaining more attention and becoming a priority of many. Educators are challenged to educate all students at an ever higher level of literacy to meet the demands of an internationally competitive marketplace, even though societal factors cause increasing numbers of students to attend school ill-equipped to learn. Schools must respond by providing support for all students to learn effectively.

As a result, many teachers are called upon to fulfill duties for which they may feel unqualified. In addition to focusing on students' cognitive development, teachers also must be prepared to address children's continuing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual growth (Kottler & Kottler, 1993) as well as helping resolve inter-personal conflicts, identifying and making referrals for those suffering from abuse, neglect, and a variety of emotional problems, and acting as mentor and counselor for those wishing to talk with someone familiar about personal problems. While it is acknowledged by most teacher education programs that these items will become part of one's job as a teacher, the vast majority of teacher training programs focus on content, materials, and pedagogy, not Social and Emotional Competency education.

Social and Emotional Competency education, while predominantly thought of as synonymous with character education, is many things to many people. While it is true that some of the goals overlap, a major difference is in the implementation of the program. Many character education programs provide a specific set of approaches that lead to a specified set of values. This in turn is thought to eventually lead to responsible behavior. The approach tends to target one particular value or behavior at a time and is taught as supplementary to the regular classroom curriculum. On the other hand, SEC programs place more emphasis on the use of certain behavioral, cognitive, and emotional skills throughout the curriculum in various contexts, promoting use of the skills in conjunction with the regular classroom curriculum. Ultimately it is an educational approach that

values and promotes decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, and responsibility taking as part of the regular curriculum and in everyday life. An SEC plan which focuses on these core components helps students to achieve their individual potential as humans. Overall, the integration of SEC skills teaching into the regular curriculum is intended to motivate students and to promote their self-confidence and their abilities of function effectively in society.

Background

The roots of social and emotional learning have existed since prior to the written text. From the time of Plato and Aristotle, society has encouraged values education as an integral part of schooling. In the 1600's and 1700's, Hornbooks and Chapbooks, which were some of the first printed materials used for schooling, included verses, stories, and scripture related to moral guidance. In the 1800's these crude printed materials were replaced by such publications as the New England Primer and McGuffey's Eclectic Readers. These publications featured the encouragement of moral and ethical behavior within the content of the reading material. However, beginning in the 1900's the issue of schools as a place to teach values, and which skills and competencies to teach, began to increase in complexity.

During the first 30 years of the 1900's, values education was a major component of schooling. Increased industrialization, urbanization, and immigration as well as World War I and the Roaring Twenties contributed to the belief that the apparent threats to moral standards needed to be addressed in some way. Schools responded by promoting character development in order to improve the lives of children and young adults and to create responsible citizens. As a result, in the 1920's, national surveys were conducted to consolidate information on character development in public schools. These surveys indicated that almost all schools in America, elementary and secondary, responded to the goal of encouraging positive character traits. However, one study, conducted by the Institute of Social and Religious Research between 1924 and 1929, stated that the ways in which character ideals were taught and related to conduct generally had no positive effect and could cause harm to students. Following the release of this report, there was a rapid decline in interest in character development as an educational goal. While the report alone did not cause the demise of the character education movement, it appeared to be one major influence that slowed the movement down. For the next, thirty years, formal teaching of positive character traits in the schools was

dormant for all intent and purposes.

Then, in the early 1960's, two approaches to a new type of moral education emerged. One of these, values clarification, was developed in order to assist people in understanding their values. The premise of the method was that if people understood their values, then their behavior should change positively and less confusion, inconsistency, or apathy would be exhibited. A second approach, moral dilemma, focused on the practice of resolving moral issues in a contained environment which promoted the development of moral reasoning. These two approaches dominated the values education movement from the 1960's through 1980's.

Current Movement

Now, as the 1900's end and education enters a new millennium, polls of parents, teachers, and community leaders and members across diverse cultural and political boundaries indicate that teachers should be equipped to meet the value-related expectations of the public. And yet, are colleges of teach education preparing educators to enter their chosen profession equipped to educate students in a way that will maximize the students' ability to learn more effectively and efficiently? Are they enabling future teachers to become competent and responsible citizen, sensitive to their role in a global community? At the same time, are schools and colleges refraining from imposing individual, personal values on their students while promoting freedom of choice, decision making, and responsibility taking?

Purpose, Methodology and Survey Participants

The overall goal of this pilot study was to examine the respondent's perceptions associated with practices related to SEC education. Within this goal, the three primary purposes included

(1) examination of basic information about the implementation of Social and Emotional Competence Education in Colleges/Schools of Education around the country related to (a) commitment to SEC Education, (b) impact of state certification, and (c) satisfaction with current preparation;

(2) comparison of findings between public and private institutions;

(3) determination of whether Colleges/Schools of Education wish to examine current and desired practices related to the integrated training of teachers and school counselors in SEC;

(4) comparison of these findings with results from national data and the 1999 Character Education Survey;

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(5) promotion of Social and Emotional Competency Education as "more valuable" than character education.

Am 8-item multiple choice survey instrument (resulting in 10 responses) was used. Questions on the survey were the result of input by teacher and counselor respondents of two studies by Bloss, Marlow, Inman, and Bernard (1996 &1997) which examined the perceptions of teachers and school counselors in K-12 educational settings related to the training for and implementation of Social and Emotional Competency (SEC) education in classroom situations. For the purposes of this study, and based on information provided in the two previous SEC studies, SEC was defined as a wide range of approaches used by educator and counselors to foster positive values and character traits in young people. This explanation of SEC was used in order to allow SEC to be interpreted according the respondents' own definitions and opinions about the sphere of social and emotional skills.

One hundred Colleges/Universities ere randomly selected, two per state with approximately 12-15 per region (Northeast, Southeast, Central, West), from Peterson's Guide to College and Universities. These schools represent a composite of the country's teacher education programs.

The response rate was 68 percent. Of those responding, 55% represented public institutions and 45% represented private institutions. Forty-two percent of the respondents agreed that they would be willing to participate in a more comprehensive written survey related to the importance (reality and goal) of promoting SEC education in Colleges of Education.

Results

Commitment to SEC Education

Tables 1 and 2 present the percentages of responses related to item 1: Commitment to SEC Education- **Admission Policies, Mission Statements, and Explicit Courses**. Table 1 supplies information compiled from all respondents. Table 2 provides comparison information related to responses from public institutions and private institutions.

Table 1: Composite Responses (n=68)

	Affirmative Responses	Negative Responses
Admission policy stressing SEC in prospective teachers	34%	66%

Written mission of College/School including SEC	36%	61%
Explicit courses dedicated to SEC learning	28%	56%

Three percent of the respondents "did not know" if their institutions had a written admission policy stressing SEC and 16% of respondents "did not know" if their colleges/schools of education offered explicit courses related to SEC education.

Table 2: Written Policies/Courses: Responses from Public and Private Institutions

	Public Institutions (n=38)		Private Institutions (n=30)	
	yes	no	yes	no
Admission policy stressing SEC in prospective teachers	38%	62%	44%	44%
Written mission including SEC	46%	54%	44%	56%
Explicit courses including SEC	31%	67%	29%	71%

Within the public institution responses, 2% didn't know if any explicit courses which included SEC were offered at their institutions. Twelve percent of private institutions did not know if their admission policy stressed SEC in prospective teachers.

Table 3 presents public and private institution responses to the issue of **political or educational entities encouraging** Colleges of Education to address **SEC education** as part of the category Commitment to SEC Education. Respondents were to identify all political or educational entities which they perceived to be encouraging the teacher education program at their insitution to address SEC education.

Table 3: Agencies Promoting SEC

	Public Institutions	Private Institutions
State education agency	31%	26%
Local political bodies	0%	0%

School districts	5%	18%
Professional Organizations	11%	41%
Other	24%	65%

One percent of both public and private institutions indicated that they were not familiar with any organizations or individuals that promote SEC at their institution. The category identified as Other is a composite of parents, pricipals, and teachers from local schools, faculty within the college/school, and administration within the college/school, as identified by the respondents.

Responses to the item related to perceived hindrances to addressing SEC education are located in Table 4. Institutional representatives were to indicate all possible responses. Five percent of the public institutions and and 12% of the private institutions did not respond to this item.

Table 4: Perceived Hindrances

	Public Institutions (n=38)	Private Institutions (n=30)	All Responses (n=68)
Crowded Curriculum	70%	53%	61%
Lack of Training	30%	18%	24%
Lack of Faculty Support	30%	0%	16%
Philosophical Disagreement	0%	12%	5%
Excessive State Certification Requirements	50%	77%	61%
Lack of School/College or University Support	10%	0%	5%
No Response	5%	12%	

Impact of State Certification

A comparison of SEC with other state priorities as reflected in **state certification requirements** is presented in Table 5. This table provides overall responses and responses according

to public and private institutions. Answers were in response to the item asking respondents to classify as non-existent, low, moderate, or high SEC education compared to other state priorities reflected in teacher certification requirements in their state.

Table 5: State Certification Impact

	Public (n=38)	Private (n=30)	All Responses (n=68)
High	10%	12%	11%
Moderate	10%	24%	16%
Low	62%	41%	53%
Non-existent	14%	29%	21%

Five percent of the respondents indicated that they did not know how SEC education compared with other teacher certification requirements in their state.

Satisfaction with Current Preparation

Table 6 provides information related to respondents' perceptions of **whether graduates are prepared with content and experiences to address SEC issues upon entering the classroom** as teachers.

Table 6: Preparation to Address SEC

	Public (n=38)	Private (n=30)	All Responses (n=68)
Yes	29%	76%	53%
No	48%	6%	29%
Don't Know	23%	18%	18%

Perceptions regarding **whether faculty** at the various institutions **are interested in improving SEC education components within colleges/schools of education** are reported in Table 7.

Table 7: Interest in SEC Education Component Improvement

	Public (n=38)	Private (n=30)	All Responses (n=68)
Yes	66%	71%	68%
No	34%	29%	32%

When asked **if Social and Emotional Competence education was a topic or issue of concern**, 90% of all respondents replied yes, 5% indicated no, and 5% failed to respond. Table 8 provides these results.

Table 8: SEC as a Topic of Concern

	Public (n=38)	Private (n=30)	All Responses (n=68)
Yes	95%	71%	90%
No	0%	29%	5%
Don't Know	5%	0%	0%
No Response	0%	0%	5%

Reasons provided for the importance of SEC within Schools/Colleges of Education can be categorized into three areas: (1) critical need because of violence and students' problems in society, (2) important because of the role of the teacher in students' lives, and (3) necessary because of increasing stresses and responsibilities of administrators (counselors, principals, etc.).

The two reasons identified for a lack of importance attributed to SEC education were:

(1) the need to model SEC rather than teach it directly and

(2) the identification of SEC as a parental (not teacher) responsibility.

Two additional concerns were identified as well: the issue of how to screen teacher education candidates to ensure they possess Social and Emotional Competence and (2) how can SEC be taught directly (and evaluated) rather than simply modeled for students.

Conclusions

As the data is compiled, several items have initially emerged as important to the authors of the study.

(1) SEC is not addressed in mission statements and admission policies nor are many explicit courses offered to students which "teach" SEC skills. This is in opposition to the indicated

importance of SEC by the respondents. Schools and Colleges (and Universities) must furnish explicit statements which provide students with expectations related to SEC education. How are future teachers to recognize the importance of SEC (as a concept or in fact) if the institutions which are preparing them for their future careers do not visibly promote SEC as part of their mission?

(2) A crowded curriculum and state requirements were perceived as the two primary hindrances to SEC inclusion. Given the emphasis on testing, increased content courses, and reorganization of certification areas, it is not surprising that college faculty feel overwhelmed by the amount of material currently found in their curriculum. But, if SEC is as important as 90% of the respondents indicated, priority must be given to finding ways to integrate SEC into the curriculum. SEC does not need to (and should not) stand alone.

(3) Although private institutions indicated that the curriculum is too crowded for SEC, they also indicated that they perceive their graduates ready to address SEC issues in their own classrooms. Given this dichotomy, more information needs to be gained in order to determine why this group feels that their graduates are so well prepared. It is also interesting to note that this item is the one on which public and private institutions differed most widely.

(4) Happily, the majority of respondents are interested in pursuing an increased emphasis on SEC education. Further data (from those schools indicating a willingness to provide additional information) will assist in the generation of ideas related to SEC inclusion. Additionally, it is anticipated that more information will help expedite the promotion of SEC as "more valuable" than character education because of its inclusive nature.

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